

As International Community Works to Preserve Auschwitz Concentration Camp, U.S. Falls Behind on Commitment of Funds

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(Washington DC) Today, U.S. Rep Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) called upon President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to join the international community in committing funds to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, which seeks to preserve the decaying Nazi death camp to ensure that the atrocities of the Holocaust never occur again.

While pledges have been made by the Polish, German, British and French governments, as well as the European Union, the United States has so far committed to little more than a promise to "review" the Foundation's plans. Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest Nazi concentration camp, the site of 1.3 to 1.5 exterminations through systematic starvation, forced labor, individual execution and gas chambers. The foundation is seeking to accumulate \$160 million for the conservation of the grounds, buildings, and artifacts of the death camp.

"As we saw in the tragic shooting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on June 10th, 2009, violent ideologies of anti-Semitism and racism still run rampant in our nation and our world," said Rep. Gutierrez. "The only way we can work toward the eradication of these painful and dangerous mentalities is to preserve, remember and teach others about the atrocities of the past. I have asked the Obama Administration to commit to this effort by at least pledging to match the highest contribution received by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation as soon as possible."

Rep. Gutierrez will also be collecting signatures from his colleagues in the House of

Representatives to demonstrate support for preserving this monumentally important historical site.

"Too many turned a blind eye to the Nazi's genocide during this dark period in our history," continued Rep. Gutierrez. "The United States must be a leader in the fight against hatred and bigotry by safeguarding an honest record of our history, so that future generations may learn from it. Auschwitz-Birkenau is an international symbol of the profound horrors that were committed, and we simply cannot afford to neglect the preservation of this rapidly deteriorating site."

"On June 5, 2009, President Obama spoke eloquently at the Buchenwald concentration camp, noting that 'It is up to us to bear witness; to ensure that the world continues to note what happened here; to remember all those who survived and all those who perished, and to remember them not just as victims, but also as individuals who hoped and loved and dreamed just like us.' His words inspired hope, and we must realize them through this important initiative."

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